

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 04300 270938Z
ACTION L-03

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 EB-08 JUSE-00 FTC-01 SEC-01
COME-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01 PA-01 CIAE-00 INR-10
NSAE-00 DOE-15 SOE-02 INT-05 OES-09 /067 W
-----088159 280542Z /21
R 270911Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8961

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EGEN, EINV, SY
SUBJECT: ILLICIT PAYMENTS: THE CASE OF THE MISSING TANKER

REF: STATE 154694

1. NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE ON TRIAL OF EIGHT OFFICIALS
OF SYRIAN PETROLEUM COMPANY (SPC) ON CHARGES OF
ACCEPTING BRIBES WAS A LITTLE BEHIND THE TIMES. THE
CRIME IN QUESTION OCCURRED IN 1975. IT CONCERNED
RECEIPT OF BRIBES BY SPC OFFICIALS TO COVER UP THE
LOADING OF 140,000 TONS OF CRUDE INTO A TANKER THAT
SIMPLY DISAPPEARED OVER THE HORIZON WITHOUT PAYMENT
TO SPC. BESIDES THE ARRESTS, THE MANAGING DIRECTOR
OF SPC WAS FIRED.

2. THE TANKER BELONGED TO THE GREEK VARDINOYANNIS
GROUP UNDER A FLAG OF CONVENIENCE BUT, ACCORDING TO
SOURCES, VARDINOYANNIS AND HIS LOCAL AGENT HAVE MANAGED
TO CLEAR THEMSELVES OF ANY CHARGES OF COLLUSION. IN
FACT, THE LOCAL AGENT, TWO YEARS LATER, ACTED ON BEHALF
OF A U.S. GROUP THAT SIGNED AN OIL EXPLORATION CONCESSION
AGREEMENT WITH SYRIA. AT THAT TIME, THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT
CONDUCTED A VIGOROUS EXAMINATION OF THE AGENT, BECAUSE
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PAGE 02 DAMASC 04300 270938Z

OF THEIR PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE, BEFORE SIGNING THE AGREEMENT.

4. INSOFAR AS OFFICIAL REPORTS OR LOCAL RUMORS GO,
THE U.S. IS CLEAN ON THIS ONE. IT IS NOT CLEAR WHERE
THE 140,000 TONS OF PETROLEUM ACTUALLY ENDED UP: FRANCE,
ITALY AND AN OIL SLICK IN THE CHANNEL ARE RATED AS THE
MOST LIKELY.

PELLETREAU

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NNN

Message Attributes

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Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Disposition Reason:
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